

Head and Neck Dental Care

Good dental care is required before, during and after treatment. Following these instructions will help prevent serious complications of treatment.

What to do Before Radiation Therapy

Before the radiation treatment is started, a complete dental examination and evaluation (including thorough teeth cleaning, filling of all cavities, and extraction of all questionable or borderline teeth) is required. You may also need custom upper and lower fluoride trays and a prescription of sodium fluoride gel from your dentist. It is very important to see your dentist as soon as possible to prevent delay in the start of your treatments.

Use Proper Tooth Brushing and Flossing

- Brush your teeth and gums with a soft toothbrush 2 to 3 times a day for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Use mild-tasting toothpaste with fluoride.
- Consider using baking soda-based toothpaste, such as Sensodyne.
- Floss gently once a day.

Use Mouth Rinses

- Do not use rinses containing alcohol.
- Consider using a mouth rinse, such as Biotene, 2 to 4 times a day.
- One of the following rinses made with salt and/or baking soda can be used:
 - 1 teaspoon of salt in 4 cups of water
 - 1 teaspoon of baking soda in 1 cup (8 ounces) of water
 - ½ teaspoon salt and 2 tablespoons baking soda in 4 cups of water

Perform Fluoride Treatment Daily

1. Fluoride Tray

- Apply topical sodium fluoride daily into the fluoride trays.
- Place the fluoride trays over the upper and lower teeth.
- The trays should remain in place for 5 minutes.
- Do not eat or drink for 30 minutes after using the fluoride trays.

OR

2. Fluoride Gel

- After brushing, directly apply topical sodium fluoride to teeth using a cotton swab.
- Leave the gel on for 5 minutes before rinsing.

What to do after Radiation Therapy

Lifetime fluoride treatment, daily brushing and flossing and regular dental check-ups are all important in the prevention of serious dental and medical complications after radiation therapy. **Do not proceed with any dental extractions without having your dentist talk to your radiation oncologist first.**